TRANSCRIPT OF A TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW

WITH JOSEPH BEARD ON

AGRICULTURE IN FAIRFAX COUNTY

by

NAN NETHERTON AND PATRICK REED

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RELEASE FOR TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEW

I, Joseph Beard, herewith agree that the transcribed, tape recorded interview of November, 1974, with Nan Netherton and Patrick Reed of the Fairfax County History Department (Division of Comprehensive Planning) may be placed in the Virginiana Room of the Fairfax County Public Library for the use of those interested in doing research on agriculture in Fairfax County and to whom my views and experience may prove valuable.

(Signed) Joseph C. Beard

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NARR: .....Joe Beard, who was Fairfax County Agent for over thirty years. Mr. Beard, we would appreciate it if you would begin by telling us a little about your youth. Where were you born?

BEARD: I was born in Fairfax County on Centreville Road between Herndon and Chantilly..... (unclear NEAR)...Frying Pan in the house that still stands across from the Aerotronics Plant at Floris. My grandmother [WOODS] lived there. My father and mother actually owned a fifty--acre farm over in Loudoun County, which is located about where the lake is at the Dulles Airport now. But, of course, in those days with the weather like it was, Mom went home to her mother's farm for me to be born there; and shortly thereafter, two or three years after, my grandmother sold that place. This was known as the Shade place. That was my advent into this area.

NARR: I would like to say that this is the twenty-first day of November, 1974. I'd like to ask Joe Beard: did you go to Fairfax County schools as you were growing up?

BEARD: Yes. As I mentioned a moment before my mother and father owned a little farm over in Loudoun County, over near Herndon, just over the Loudoun County line from Fairfax. In 1922, they sold that fifty-acre farm and bought an 162-acre farm over on the Fairfax side of Loudoun County, which is also in the existing airport now, so that my brother and I might attend Floris Vocational Agricultural Highschool. Floris Vocational Agricultural Highschool was built about 1919 to 1920, and much of this was through the efforts of H.B. Derr, who was County Agricultural Agent at that time. He worked hard to get vocational agriculture and home economics classes in highschools here. Loudoun County did not have one of these schools. My father moved over there for two reasons. He wanted a larger farm, and the second reason was he wanted his sons to go to this Vocational Agricultural Highschool. I graduated from this Vocational Agricultural Highschool in 1927.

NARR: I read in the County Agent's reports, and these were the reports of Mr. Derr, that he was indeed instrumental in having this established in Floris. He said that it

NARR: was one of the best in the state, and I was wondering how many there were in the state at that time.

BEARD: At that time there were only about seven. Now, Mr. Johnson, who is retired from the Vocational Agricultural Department in the Federal Bureau of the Department of Education lives here in Arlington now, and he knows about these schools. I've checked with him, and, to the best of my knowledge, this was either the sixth or the seventh department in the state. There were one or two vocational agriculture departments started in 1917. This one Mr. Derr attempted to get in 1917, but was unsuccessful, and through his continued efforts and the help of all those who were interested in it locally, this department was established at what was then known as Floris, which has since become known as Frying Pan. Mr. Derr was successful in working with the farmers and the Department of Education locally, and he got that department started in 1919.

NARR: What happened after you graduated from Floris then?

BEARD: I graduated from Floris in 1927, and of course, I wanted to go to VPI, but in those days we were going into the depression. We had two years without rainfall, and the farmers were hard-pressed. My father found there just wasn't enough money to send a boy to college and replace him with a hired man and keep the payments up on the loans that were made on his farm when he bought it. So I worked there in partnership with my father on the dairy farm for 1927-1928. In the fall of 1929 I entered Virginia Polytechnic Institute as a freshman.

NARR: What did you major in at VPI?

BEARD: I majored in Dairy Husbandry. I intended to take General Agriculture, because I thought I might like to teach vocational agriculture if I had to get a job other than farming, but as it turned out I was persuaded by the Dairy Husbandry Department to enroll in Dairy Husbandry inasmuch as I had been raised on a dairy farm and I had carried dairy projects for my vocational agriculture classes. I had judged on the dairy judging team of the Vocational Highschool, and this was the leading dairy

BEARD: county in the state of Virginia at that time.

NARR: Did I understand you correctly to say, Mr. Beard, that the 1920's were hard times for farmers in Fairfax County?

BEARD: Well, of course, the early 1920's was the end of World War I; and at that time prices were inflated and at that time farmers received a fair share of the consumer's dollar. That wasn't too bad, but the late 1920's were quite severe. That was the buildup of the severe depression that we had during those years. Furthermore we went for two years in this local area without rainfall during the summer months. This made it necessary for the livestock farmers to buy feed. It was all imported from the north and the western states to feed their livestock during the winter months. This put them in double jeopardy. As a matter of fact conditions became so bad at that time that the Federal Land Bank Loan declared a moratorium on payments of the mortgages which farmers had gotten through the Federal Land Bank Association, because many of our farmers were at the point where their farms would have been foreclosed if this hadn't been what happened. So this was a very severe time. It was the beginning of the big economic depression that you hear so much about today.

NARR: What was transportation like in Fairfax County during the 1920's? Was it a real problem for you in getting to highschool or in to markets?

BEARD: Well, since my father moved over to Fairfax County near the Floris Vocational Highschool my brother and I could walk to school. We only had to go one and a half miles, and that was a short distance to walk in those days. But Floris Vocational Agricultural Highschool drew boys and girls from all over the County, who wished to study agriculture and take home economics. There was a long shed built on the grounds of this highschool that held eighteen horses. Many of the boys and girls drove in some road, horseback; two or three of them would come in buggies, and then some of them would board nearby. So transportation was a problem compared....well, it wasn't a problem compared with what it is today, because nobody had any trouble getting a horse up and down the road, and there weren't so many of them that we had traffic

BEARD: jams. Be this as it may, our problems with getting our products to market was not too terrible, because it was the custom in those days to hook a horse to a lone wagon, or, if you had a large load, you'd hook two horses to a farm wagon and haul your milk or your product to a railroad station. And at that time the Washington and Old Dominion Railway ran from Rosslyn, Virginia, to Bluemont, Virginia, up through Falls Church, Vienna, Herndon, Sterling and all up the line. In my early days, I remember during the World War my brother and I used to drive a little black mare hitched to a spring wagon with four ten-gallon cans of milk to the railroad station each morning for a year or so during World War Two (obviously he meant One) before we went to school. So this was customary. Then about 1918 or 19 the farmers formed a cooperative and bought two great big General Motors trucks. They had solid tires on them, but the problem was in the wintertime when these big heavy trucks, which would go through the mud because they were of the World War I era build, but the problem was that they would tear up the country roads, which were not paved, so badly that really it was almost impossible for any other vehicle, even with a horse and wagon, to get in and out of the roads. The farmers began during 1918, 1920's and along in there to gradually become involved with tractors and automobiles and trucks. This was the beginning of that period. Our big problem at that time was the roadways. Of course, as you know Senator Harry Byrd, Sr., of Virginia formed a policy that if he was elected governor he would see to it that the country roads were taken over by the state rather than by respective counties and magisterial districts; and that he would get farm to market roads built. And he did.

NARR: That was called the Byrd Road Act.

BEARD: This was called the Byrd Road Act, and he was remembered for this as long as he lived. We were quite appreciative of this. The roads at that time, there was a paved road from Alexandria to Winchester known as the Little River Turnpike. At about where Frying Pan is today, into Herndon, that was paved, but none of these other roads were paved.

NARR: Does that mean that Route Seven wasn't paved at that time?

BEARD: Parts of it I don't believe were at that time.

NARR: So Little River Turnpike was the one that was paved at that time and not Route Seven?

BEARD: Right. I'm not real sure about Route Seven. I know Little River Turnpike was paved. It had two tracks: one of them was paved and the other was unpaved, and when the horses' feet got sore walking on the stones in the paved area, why then you'd put him down on the unpaved area so that he could get home before it became too late.

NARR: I'd like to ask you one more question before we get back to your education and early career. Would you say that Washington, the District, the City was already luring Fairfax County farm youth away from the farms in the 1920's?

BEARD: Well, yes and no. Of course, there was some tendency for the young boys and girls to go to Washington to work. Now, of course, you remember when we came out of World War Two, during World War Two it was a patrictic motive for those people that were necessary to stay on the farms, to stay there and produce crops.

NARR: Wait a minute, I think you mean World War One. Don't you?

BEARD: I'm sorry. I mean World War One. During World War One it was a patriotic motive for the young men to stay on the farm and produce crops. As a matter of fact they were not drafted if they were legitimate farmers, so this kind of put a damper on people leaving. But shortly after this, of course, there was a tendency for people to go to Washington, D.C., and get jobs. But this was not as much of a problem as it might appear to be by virtue of the fact that most of the farmers raised anywhere from two to five children. Most every farmer's hired man raised anywhere from two to five children. Now there just wasn't room enough on this farm to employ ten or twelve children. So with this kind of activity, either the farmer's son or daughter might go to Washington to get a job, or, if he didn't, the farmer's hired man's sons or daughters went to Washington and got jobs. Whenever you have this happening, the wages are always higher in the metropolitan area than they are in the rural

BEARD: area. This always causes some friction. Now that type of thing occurred then the same as it always has been. You must remember also that the farm wages in those days were much much less than they were in most other types of businesses, industries and professions. So this always caused somewhat of a discussion, but I don't believe, as I look back at it now, that this was much of a problem. However, you heard about the same things said then as you do today.

NARR: May I ask was there much transfer in the other direction? Were people from the city moving out in Fairfax County to live at this time?

BEARD: No, this didn't.....well, we had commuter trains in those days. There was one that ran from Great Falls and came on up to McLean and from McLean into Washington. Then you had the little commuter trains that ran from Rosslyn on up into Loudoun County, into Ashburn ~~(Ash Grove?)~~, Leesburg, Sterling and along the line. We had people who lived along this railroad and commuted by train to Washington, but we did not have the type of commuting that you have today. Because, in the first place, the roads were impossible; in the second place, we didn't have automobiles, and, in the third place, it took you about half a day to ride a horse from here into Washington. It would take the other half day to ride back.

NARR: Let's get back to schooling, because I am interested in your career following your graduation from VPI. Did you start off as an Assistant Agent or Agent in Fairfax County or did you start off elsewhere in the state?

BEARD: Upon graduation from VPI it was almost impossible to get jobs, and the only opening that I found at that time was the job of testing milk in a Dairy Herd Improvement Association in Prince William County. An opening occurred there, and I took this job as soon as I could after I graduated from college. It happened in those days that it was very difficult to get jobs, and we would be interviewed by people who wanted dairy specialists. But it just seemed like that during this depression time that none of them were accepted. So I applied for active duty with the Army. Having gotten a job with the 34th Infantry as a second lieutenant at Ft. Meade, Maryland, then the next thing for me to do was to get out of the regular Army

BEARD: and accept a position in the organized reserves, which I did and followed throughout my life until I was retired thirty years later from that type of duty. But I took a job as soon as possible after the military service, that summer, as a milk tester in a Dairy Herd Improvement Association in Prince William County, Virginia, over here at Manassas. And I stayed on the job until November 15th of that same year, and then I was appointed Assistant County Agricultural Agent of Princess Anne County, Virginia, down near Norfolk. This is now Virginia Beach City. At that time I stayed there until March 15th, 1934, when I was appointed County Agricultural Agent of Middlesex County in Virginia.

NARR: How long were you at Middlesex County then?

BEARD: Just a little under four years.

NARRA: How was it that you came to be the agent in Fairfax County then?

BEARD: Mr. Derr, whom we all know and whom I had known for years, was County Agricultural Agent of Fairfax County until 1937, when he became 72 years old and retired because of age. I succeeded him as County Agricultural Agent. I was invited to come up by the Grange and the other agricultural organizations of the County for an interview. In September of 1937 they appointed me, half an hour after the interview was over. Then I moved from Middlesex with my wife, Estelle, to Fairfax in December, 1937, and took over as the Agricultural Agent on [December] JANUARY 1, 1938.

NARR: I heard you mention the Grange, and I'm interested in your remark there. Was your appointment dependent upon their recommendation?

BEARD: At that time the Grange was quite strong in Fairfax County. There were four subordinate Granges and one Pomona ~~Co~~ Grange. This was the largest agricultural organization county-wide at that time. Of course, they took an interest in the affairs of agriculture and other civic activities, much as the civic associations do in our subdivisions today. They reviewed the situation and invited me to come up for an interview. They even got me an appointment with the Board of Supervisors for an interview. Of course, I was hired with the approval of the Board

BEARD: of Supervisors.

NARR: Let me ask this: I was reading in the County Agent's reports and also in the Library of Congress yesterday that the Grange was a secret organization.

BEARD: It's secret to the extent of a ritual, very much like the Masons. However, their activities in this kind of thing were open the same as any other civic organization is, but it does have a ritual, a secret ritual open only to Grange members, the same as Masons and other organizations of this kind. How do they handle this type of thing? They have a ritual to open the meeting and then they throw it open to the public and do whatever they are going to do. Then after the non-Grange members have left, if there are those present, then they close with a ritual. This is what is involved. I have been a Grange member ever since I came to Fairfax County in 1938. It's true that they do have this secret ritual for opening and closing, but I see little difference between them and some religious organizations as far as this is concerned.

NARR: I found in the Library of Congress some really outstanding photographs of the officers and some of the members of the Grange in 1940. Will you be able to identify these people do you think when I get the prints?

BEARD: I would think so. We've had one or two radio programs with the Federal Department of Agriculture in those years, and a good many Grange members were present. I remember Mr. Ronald Blake was there, Mr. Wells Sherman, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Fox and perhaps other Grange members that took part in this discussion. Some of these would be, I suspect, in these pictures.

NARR: From Mr. Derr's reports, from the mid-1920's, he seemed to indicate it was quite difficult to get the farmers to organize in the 1920's. When did the Grange become organized and active in Fairfax County?

BEARD: About 1926-27-28.

NARR: Can I ask you a question about another organization in the County? Mr. Derr mentioned that at many of the young people's agricultural fairs in the 1920's often

NARR: outside groups or organizations were one of the leading attractions, and the Ku Klux Klan was mentioned specifically by Mr. Derr. Do you know anything about the Ku Klux Klan in the County or its activities?

BEARD: Well, the Ku Klux Klan: I knew of it, I knew there was such a thing. Of course, I never was a member, but I did attend one or two political rallies in 1927 on what is now the parking lot of the George Mason Annex here, which was formerly the old Fairfax City Highschool. There must have been fifteen-hundred Ku Klux people there that night in support of some issue one way or the other, one of the political organizations.

NARR: Would you say then there was much racial animosity in the County? Was this the direction of the Klan's activities at that time?

BEARD: I never saw or heard locally anything that had to do specifically with special racial problems. Of course, you know what they stood for: they were prejudiced in racial situations. It seemed to me that the rallies that I attended.....they didn't even have on hoods or anything. They had on uniforms, white uniforms, but their faces were not covered. I knew who some of them were, because I saw some of my friends there, and it was ~~(unclear)~~ more of a political rally at that time as far as I understood.

NARR: I noticed in the 1930 statistical report that there was a mention of negro agent reports. You know it was generally the printed form, and I was wondering did Fairfax ever have a negro agent?

BEARD: No, Fairfax did not have a negro agent. At that time the negro agricultural extension and home economics work came out of Virginia Union College at Petersburg, Virginia, and it was run separately from Virginia Polytechnic Institute, which was the headquarters for all the white agents. However, they did interchange information, but as the custom was in those days each group of races was welcome to join in and mix with meetings and understandings and exchange demonstrations and things like that, but they didn't do much of it, because they just had two organizations,

BEARD: which sort of worked side by side like two Protestant denominations in the same community.

NARR: Would you say then, getting back to the Klan, that their interests were more political and economic rather than racial in the 1920's?

BEARD: Well, from my point of view they were. This was the impression that I received at that time. You remember that I was a student in highschool during those days. Of course, my mother and father never participated in any of these rallies, but I was allowed to go with the other highschool boys just for the curiosity of it.

NARR: Even in those times, was it a curiosity?

BEARD: Yes, I suspect this would be a curiosity for any young person.

NARR: Something that kept recurring and recurring in the annual reports was the matter of orchards and vineyards. I really am very much interested in knowing when these orchards were planted from the earliest times even by statute in the state of Virginia. Why is it that we have so few, if any, left? Was it disease or the suburban impact or what?

BEARD: It was the suburban impact, the price of land and the cost of labor were the two things. When I moved to Fairfax County in 1938 there were seventeen commercial orchards that produced apples and peaches and there were eight or ten grape vineyards. They sold these products locally. As urbanization went along, these commercial fruit orchards were replaced by nurseries that grew ornamental plants and shrubs for sale to the suburban home owners (~~unclear~~), and of course, the grape vineyards went by the way for the same reason. As a general rule, whenever land becomes twice as valuable for uses other than agriculture, the orchards, the vineyards and the extensive livestock farming methods have to be replaced, because they're not economically feasible on that high priced land.

NARR: I noticed a term that I didn't understand. Perhaps you can explain to me, is the term "Washington Milkshed Area" an adaptation of "Watershed"?

BEARD: Yes.

NARR: Is it meant to be humorous?

BEARD: No, no. A "Milkshed" simply means the community or the area or the limits on which milk is produced and shipped to a certain market. Milk is a perishable product; and in those days there wasn't the type of refrigeration that we have today, and there were not the highways that we have today. So therefore it was usually determined by a rail line or a truck route or some other type of thing. Now since mechanical refrigeration has come into being, and since this is also on farms just as it is out in the transportation business, milk can be kept for a number of hours. That was not originally true. So it's usually determined by: first, the transportation and communication system, and secondly, the refrigeration system. That's what determined the "Milkshed" in those days. Today, with the transportation being what it is and the refrigeration being what it is, it's a question of economics alone.

NARR: Now another thing that keeps recurring in both Mr. Derr's reports and yours is the matter of "Culling", culling in both dairy and poultry stock which seemed to be the predominant agricultural pursuits in this century in Fairfax County. I haven't gotten up to modern times, but this is in the '20's and '30's. Was the culling procedure resisted by the farmers or did they....perhaps you'd better explain fully what culling is and tell me what response there was to the Agricultural agents attempts to get the culling done.

BEARD: Culling is a term which is used to indicate the removal of the less fit and less profitable. In those days the average hen only laid eighty eggs per year. Today the average hen lays over two hundred eggs per year, and many of them produce 220-230 eggs per year. Now this has been done by selection, eliminating those who did not have the ability to produce large numbers of eggs. This can be done very easily by anyone who studied poultry husbandry or understands what things to look for, and the same thing is true of the dairy cow. Now this is one of the main reasons for this Dairy Herd Improvement Association, whereby a person who is skilled and trained under the direction of the Agricultural Experiment Station would visit a farmer's farm one day each month, weigh the milk from each cow morning and

BEARD: evening so he gets a 24-hour sample. He weighs all the feed that that cow consumed during that 24-hour period, and then he tested the milk to determine its butterfat content and other food values and made a report to the farmer on each individual cow. Then he figured up the cost of the feed that this animal ate, and he also figured up the value of the product that she produced. At the end of a year the farmer had an individual record on each individual cow, and he could use this to eliminate the least profitable, the least desirable.. He could propagate and establish a breeding program that would allow him to expand on the most profitable animals through inheritance and genetics and things of this kind. Now along with this the Agricultural Agent taught management practices such as feeding, disease control and other things along with this culling, but this all was a help. There was a tendency for farmers to resist these practices at first, but when it was learned that these recommendations and methods began to pay off, why sooner or later the majority of the farmers would participate. Not everyone, of course, but we eventually arrived at the point where perhaps eighty per cent of them would participate in this type of thing. You must remember that it was not accepted in the very beginning. Perhaps it took fifteen years or so for most of these things to be accepted. Then after a while when the farmers found out that this was true, many times in later years, toward the 1940's there'd be more requests for this type of thing than the Agent could take over, so what he did under those conditions was to train others that were volunteer leaders that would go out and show other people, other farmers or other poultry raisers, these practices.

MARR: Another subject which came up, and I'm referring to a report by Mr. Lerr in 1927: he was talking about Fairfax County being the third county in the United States to be scrub free. I was wondering if you knew what the other two counties were, and what this business about the scrub stock, which I believe applied to the bulls, which were used for the dairy cattle..

BEARD: Scrub was a term which was used for an animal of unknown genetic background who had questionable capabilities of producing the desired qualities. It's just generally known as a scrub. It meant it wasn't pedigreed, of course, and while all pedigreed animals were not necessarily the best, they were of known ancestry, and you could have much better opportunity to receive offspring that would be more like them. The scrubs were generally known though as of unknown origin in all forms of livestock, and was usually referred to as a scrub bull by virtue of the fact that his influence over the herd was fifty per cent, whereas each female was on fifty percent of the offspring that she had. However, he was over fifty percent of the entire calf crop each year. It was very important that he not reduce the desirable qualities of the whole herd, so it was more important to have a registered or pedigreed animal of known characteristics. Now I don't know which counties he had reference to as being the first and second counties in the country.

NARR: One of Mr. Derr's central concerns in the 1920's seemed to be his inability to convince the farmers to improve their homes. Was this also one of your primary concerns?

BEARD: Yes, but when I came along we had Home Demonstration Agents, which worked in cooperation and in tandem so to speak with all the men agents. And while the men agents were primarily interested in soils and crops and livestock and fertilizers and things of this caliber, and the ladies were primarily interested in food and nutrition and cooking and clothing, the men and women agents did work together as a team and talk together, and therefore we did frequently. Mr. Derr organized in this county a number of Farmers' Clubs, back in his day, in which there were twelve members in each club. In each month of the year they'd meet one day in one of these twelve farmer's homes. The farmer and his wife would come to the Farmers' Club meeting. The ladies would have their program and the men would have theirs. Of course, these people had their morning and evening work to do on the farms, so they

BEARD: usually got to one of these member's homes with a potluck dinner at about ten or ten-thirty in the morning. Mr. Derr would speak with the men about the scrub bulls and fertilizer and lime and ~~tare~~ better seed methods. The ladies would do likewise. The Home Agent with their group about canning, cooking, sewing, whatever it may be. We were both interested in this type of thing. You see both sides were interested in providing income through nutrition for a better way of life for the farm family.

NARR: One thing that made me curious as I was reading all these annual reports: why did the Home Demonstration seem to be changing all the time while there was a lot of longevity and continuity in the Agricultural Agent?

BEARD: Well, Agricultural Agents usually continue on their job when they become married, and many times the Home Agents, when they became married, took up the family duties with their husband. That was one reason. The other reason was that there weren't very many trained ladies in these programs. There were always more men agents than there were home agents, and many times we had a Home Agent who stayed in a county for a number of years, and they would always send in the young agents for training under this individual. And this made a continuous turnover, because they were only there for training anywhere from six months to two years. This is another reason why so many transfers took place.

NARR: Was any thought given to the amount and variety of chemicals? It seems like an enormous number of chemicals used for the control of pests and diseases.

BEARD: Very much so. The new pesticides, insecticides, fungicides were coming out all the time, and it was a policy of the state of Virginia and of most other states in the Agricultural Extension Service that these products would have to be tested by the Experiment Station of the respective states in which they were to be used by their specialists for three years before they would say that they could recommend that for general use. Now the manufacturers that produced these insecticides and fungicides and fertilizers and other chemicals had usually done this in their testing programs prior to this time. So many times an agent would be bombarded with

BEARD: all these new advertisements coming from the supplier or the chemical company of these particular products. But he would not recommend them until they had been tested out by his Experiment Station for three years. And this was a built-in safety factor, a Ralph Nader type of thing that was adopted as a policy by the Virginia Agricultural Extension Service for the protection of the individuals concerned. You must remember that nearly always when a company tested these products it was done under controlled conditions. The Agricultural Extension Service has a corollary organization known as the Experiment Stations, and we have some twelve or thirteen of those Experiment Stations in Virginia.

NARR: Are these farmers who agree to be cooperaters or what are they?

BEARD: We have two kinds. We have the products being tried out on the farmer's farm and observed. This is done by the local agent and the farmers themselves. But the Agricultural Experiment Stations are owned and controlled by the State Agricultural College. We have one at Orange, Virginia; we have one here at Middleburg, Virginia; we have one at Culpeper, and we have them scattered all over Virginia, depending on the area. The general purpose of this is to try it out under different weather conditions and under different soil conditions and all that type of thing. This became a tremendous program right after World War II. The advent of all the sulfa drugs, the penicillin and teramycin and antibiotics of various kinds, the various hormone feedings and diethylesterol in produce feed and in dairy cattle. You hear so much comment about this. The Experiment stations would have to test this out on cattle and on chickens and then let the humans take another look at it before these things were liberated because the Extension Service has to be completely reliable as far as testing is concerned. There are errors made, but every safeguard that you can think of is taken. This was a real factor. As a matter of fact, we had a handbook, and it must have had thousands of those things listed in it. It was like an encyclopedia or a dictionary. As the multiplicity of this type of insecticide, chemical,

BEARD: environmental verbiage came into being the agent's concept quite frequently changed. He had to spend at least thirty per cent of his time studying, and then he would have to look up everything when anybody answered him over the phone, because it was almost impossible to keep all of them in your mind. Of course, the more common ones were everyday practice.

NARR: Was any thought given to a buildup of the use all these chemicals? Was that a worry and was there a thought about interreaction of the use of various chemicals, which hadn't been tested together?

BEARD: Well, the theory of buildup as I recall was not accepted as much then, and people were not as conscious of it as they are today. There was consideration given to it in the testing programs, however, you must realize that it may be fifteen years before one can recognize these types of things. So, while consideration was given to it, I'm sure that many of the things that we know today were not found out for some time.

NARR: I wanted to ask a few of the facts about the everyday operation of this agency. For instance, I didn't find any specific reference in the period I was covering to who paid the salary of the agent and how much it was and whether or not the sources of funding changed through the years.

BEARD: In the very beginning, two-thirds or better of the salaries were paid by the State Agricultural College. One-third or one-fourth or whatever supplementaries were received came from the counties in which the agent was stationed.. This varied a great deal. You are supposed to remember that when the station program had its advent in 1914,at that time all the agents' full salaries were paid I believe on a temporary demonstration basis by the Federal Department of Agriculture to money which was appropriated to the Agricultural and Mechanical Colleges. Basically, as time went along, and the program developed and the meaning of the programs were understood, a rough figure would have been that approximately one-third of the salaries came from the counties; one-third were from state monies, and one-third was from federal monies. An Agricultural Extension Agent

BEARD: was then responsible to the three governments: the Federal government, the State government through the State Agricultural College and to the County government.

NARR: I had the feeling as I was reading the reports, as the Government's alphabet soup came into being in the '30's, the various agencies of the Federal government, I had the feeling there that that was when this transition occurred, because there was so much paperwork involved in keeping up with the Federal programs that I noticed several times clerks were funded or some kind of office assistance was provided in order to keep up with the Federal programs..

BEARD: Well, you see the Agricultural Extension Service and Agricultural Home Economics was a demonstration and an educational program. In the '30's with the advent of the Roosevelt Administration there came into being what was known as the Agricultural Adjustment Administration in which a farmer would enter into a contract with the Federal government for restricted production in acreage in return for certain subsidies. These were exacting contracts between the individual farmer and the Federal government. The Agricultural Extension Agents were responsible for the educational work for this to be done. Now in some states the Agricultural Adjustment Administration organization was completely separate ~~for~~ FROM the administration of that program as far as the Exxtension Services were concerned. You had two offices, one for the Agricultural Adjustment Administration group, which handled the contracts and the legal work of preparing the contracts, the papers and agreements, and then the County Agricultural Agents did the educational work. In Virginia an agreement was arrived at by the President of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and the Federal government that the County Agricultural Agents in the state would do both for a period of two years and avoid the duplication. So in many cases some direct Federal money, some people were paid by direct Federal money. In other cases they were paid by an agreement, a cooperative affair between the Federal monies and the State monies; and some clerks were paid completely by Federal monies, and, in a few cases, some clerks were even paid by Counties. So in order to get the job done there were various working agreements made out. Now I don't mean to say they didn't have standards. I mean there were

BEARD: many waivers involved in the emergencies to get these things done. I'm sure when I was Assistant Agent that I was paid completely by Federal money, but the minute I was appointed in Middlesex as an Agent why then I entered into the cooperative service of State-Federal-County money. There were many positions though that were temporary as long as this emergency existed that were paid for by Federal monies. There were a few counties that took the money in order to get the service. However there was an agreement reached in the state of Virginia that if the cooperative Extension Service took care of both the administration and the educational programs of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration that they would guarantee that there would be a County Agricultural Agent in every in every ~~state~~ county that these programs were involved in. And this was one of the reasons that gave the Extension Service quite a boost in Virginia at that time, because there were one hundred counties in Virginia when this program began. Only eighty-one of them had County Agricultural Agents: the rest of them got them within a few weeks after this program was intiated.

NARR: They had to have one hundred percent?

BEARD: Yes. If they didn't have an agent, they didn't get the program.

NARR: What about the County Agent's office in Fairfax: did it change around to different places or was it in the same place for many years?

BEARD: The location? Physical location?

NARR: Yes

BEARD: It changed about every four or five years.

NARR: I noticed that it seemed that it was in the upstairs of the County Clerk's office at one time. Is that right?

BEARD: It was upstairs in the County Clerk's office when I arrived here. I served in five different locations during the years.

NARR: If I can go back briefly, Mr. Beard, would you say that in your youth, growing up in Fairfax County, that there was a feeling of resentment toward the City by Fairfax County people, various kinds of farmers in particular?

BEARD: No, I wouldn't say so except in individual cases. My mother and father were both raised in the Valley of Virginia, and their problem up there was getting things to market. Why, they had to drive turkeys in droves all the way to Philadelphia. They had to drive cattle for miles to a market. So, by coming closer to a large market, and I often asked my mother why did they move down here from the beautiful valley? They said simply because there were no markets up there, and they wanted a place to market their farm produce and their crops. Now the other reverse side of it is that some of the areas around here, in around Herndon and out here at Frying Pan, had boarding houses, and people would come up there and live and spend their vacations in the summertime and eat fresh country butter, drink buttermilk, eat fresh vegetables and fried chicken. This was quite good for both the farmer and the city dweller. So I remember there was an interchange of these activities which was mutually beneficial.

NARR: I noticed in around 1939, the first time I observed this, the farmers were very happy because the Board of Supervisors had agreed to have a general reassessment the next year, that was 1940, and the comment in this annual report which you wrote, Mr. Beard, was that finally the residential dwellers of the County would be paying their fair share and the farmers would be somewhat relieved of an overburden of taxation. Do you remember that as being a sort of a feeling of conflict or just equity that they were trying to have adjusted?

BEARD: Well, as urbanization takes place the land adjacent to the urbanization projects increases and doubles in value very quickly, and when assessments are made on a five year basis or a four year basis, the urbanization people came in and they required improved roads and schools and school teachers and things of this kind. Therefore, without a reassessment the existing tax revenues have to pay for this, and the rate is just increased. So we did not have annual reassessments like we are having or supposed to be having today; and this is very necessary in order to equalize the tax base.

NARR: In other words there was such an increase in services demanded or needed?

BEARD: What if you'd had to build a complete new school here? And who paid for it? If that land was still assessed at the same values as it was when it was farm?

NARR: What do you know about crops which were raised here in the eighteenth century? Did you ever hear anybody talking about that? Or was it ever a concern of yours? Or were you too busy? Was there ever any study of this at VPI or discussion or interest in it among the County Agents? Did they attribute the need for extensive fertilizing to backward customs, (unclear)

BEARD: There's quite an essay written on this by Commander Jones from Fairfax Station. This was written about the problem, and the problem was that we did not have insect control and we did not have fertilization programs. We didn't lime the land. People relied mostly on stable manure, and many times that wasn't disposed of so it could be used to an advantage. So the yields of wheat were only about eighteen to nineteen bushels per acre where you had a staple manure, and were down to about eight or nine bushels per acre where they didn't use staple manure. A farmer would have to work himself to death in order to get enough feed and food just to take care of his family and his livestock. He didn't have any to sell. So there was a great need for this kind of thing. Of course, farmers always somewhat reluctant to change to new methods until they were sure that they knew what they were doing. They knew that the old system would work, and they weren't too sure that the new one would work. There was a need for this, but I do not recall any specific programs in this area except of the old plantation type where you produced a lot of hay so that you could have a lot of horses to grow a lot of hay to grow some more horses to grow some more hay, and you were going like a monkey going around trying to catch his tail.

NARR: Does this mean there wasn't very much crop rotation until the Extension Service got in here?

BEARD: There was very little crop rotation, and their own crop system was generally accepted by most plantation owners. This was not conducive to soil fertility, erosion control or conservation of any type.

NARR: Mr. Beard, I can see that we're going to have many more questions for you. With your permission we would like to stop here and review our notes and come back and visit with you again very soon.

BEARD: Well, this has been real fine. Do so again soon.

NARR: Thank you.

Interview with Joseph Beard conducted by Nan Netherton and Patrick Reed